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SUBJECT: RUSSIA: NATIONALISTS TO MARCH ON NOVEMBER 4

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11. SUMMARY: On Russia Unity Day, November 4, a large nationalist "Russia March" is planned for several Russian cities, including Moscow. Russia March is being organized by the Movement Against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) and is supported by several other nationalist and fascist groups, and by some Duma members. Mayor Luzhkov has banned the march in Moscow, but organizers are undeterred, creating the potential for clashes with the police. Liberal groups are split between those who want extremist speech banned and those who support the right to assemble. The Embassy plans to observe the marches from a safe distance. END SUMMARY.

2005 March: Neo-Nazis on Moscow's Streets

12. Russia Unity Day was first celebrated in 2005, when it replaced the November 7 "Accord and Reconciliation Day," which had in turn replaced the October Revolution holiday. Officially, the new holiday marks Russia's expulsion of Polish-Lithuanian troops from the country in 1612.

13. In November 2005, a nationalist march was organized by the anti-American Eurasian Youth Union (EYU). Several nationalist, fascist, and Russian Orthodox groups joined the march. EYU, which is nationalistic, but fiercely anti-fascist, attempted to prohibit the display of fascist symbols, but some marchers (including DPNI members) wore swastika arm bands and shouted "Sieg Heil." The presence of neo-Nazis in the streets of Moscow caused an uproar.

14. Television coverage of the 2005 march was minimal in Russia, and it downplayed the presence of neo-Nazis and fascist symbols. Except for a few minor altercations with the liberal youth group "Defense" and the communist youth group "Vanguard of the Red Youth," the 3,000 participants marched without incident.

2006 Russia March - Banned in Moscow and Other Cities

15. Russia March organizer DPNI is a nationalist, anti-immigrant group that supports the deportation of all illegal migrants, stricter immigration legislation and visa requirements, reduced employment opportunities for foreign workers, and the creation of volunteer anti-migrant brigades. DPNI emerged in July 2002, following violent clashes between locals and migrants in Krasnoarmeysk and Novosibirsk, which resulted in several deaths. It recently gained media

attention following clashes between ethnic Russians and Chechens in the northwestern city of Kondopoga. DPNI currently claims branches in more than forty cities.

¶6. The 2006 Russia March, planned for nine cities, has been banned in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Krasnoyarsk, Chita, Vladivostok, and Blagoveshchensk. Several State Duma deputies wrote to Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov asking him to allow the march, but to no avail.

¶7. The organizers plan to hold the march despite the city's decision. In response, the city has announced 6,500 policemen will be deployed to enforce Luzhkov's ban. In a November 3 meeting, Chairman of the Moscow City Duma Vladimir Platonov promised that the police would "crush" any group defying the ban, although he allowed that some, "peaceful" groups had received permission to mark the holiday.

¶8. Due to the ban, the Russia March first planned to literally move underground and assemble in a metro station. In a November 3 press conference, Duma deputy and Russia March "Chairman" Viktor Alksnis announced that DPNI would join a rally to be staged by the People's Will party and permitted by the city. We do not know if this was coordinated with People's Will or if DPNI is being opportunist. The Russia March website is now directing people to meet at the site of that rally and asks the city and federal authorities to allow them to assemble.

Some Duma Deputies Will March

¶9. DPNI claims that 23 State Duma deputies will take part in the march, including former Rodina leader Dmitry Rogozin, Rodina deputies Nikolay Pavlov and Andrey Saveliev, and LDPR deputy Nikolay Kuryanovich. On November 1, the LDPR expelled

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Kuryanovich from the party for his support of this march, among other things. Rogozin has declared the decision to march as a necessary act of civil disobedience.

¶10. Rogozin's decision to participate has worried some human rights workers, including the Movement for Human Rights leader Lev Ponomarev, who stated that Rogozin's participation "makes it an event backed up by prominent politicians, and not something concocted by those on the margins."

Organizers Emphasize Nationalism, not Fascism

¶11. DPNI organizers are trying to portray a strongly nationalistic, but not ultra-nationalistic face. On their websites (www.rusmarch.org and www.DPNI.org), they have posted recommended posters and slogans to be used during the march. Signs include "Glory to Russia!", "Russians, Forward!", and "Kondopoga is a Hero City." Many of the signs are designed to attract young men to the march, including several featuring alluring young women saying, "I'm going, are you?" The fascist Slavic Union, unhappy with the march's moderate tone, withdrew from the march's planning committee but nevertheless plans to be on the streets with them.

Other Groups Holding Events

¶12. In addition to the Russia March and the People's Will rally, one other nationalist and one anti-fascist event are planned. A group of nationalist Russian Orthodox organizations will participate in a rally organized by the Orthodox Patriots. The liberal Russian Anti-Fascist Front, which includes leaders from the Union of Rightist Forces (SPS), Yabloko, the Helsinki Group, and the committee "For

Civil Rights," is planning a Fascism-Free Russia rally.

Liberals' Dilemma: Oppose the March or the Ban?

¶13. In an open letter to Luzhkov, a group of liberal and human rights activists wrote that the Russia March should be banned "in the event that anti-constitutional or extremist banners and slogans are used." Other liberals, while opposed to the march, believe the city's ban only helps the nationalists. Andrey Babushkin, chairman of the "For Civil Rights" committee and organizer of the Fascism-Free Russia rally, said, "The ban on the march was wrong. Permitting the march would strengthen the (nationalist) moderate wing and weaken the radical wing."

¶14. Human Rights Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin opposes the ban on legal grounds and told the press, "Both freedom of assembly, which is in the Constitution, and the laws governing demonstrations must be observed." He urged the government to allow the march, but to observe it closely and act if marchers violate laws on extremist speech.

¶15. On October 27, skinheads attacked anti-fascist demonstrators who were protesting against the Russia March outside of the Russian White House. The two groups were quickly separated by the militia. There is a potential for additional clashes between pro-and anti-fascist groups, and for clashes with the police. Pro-fascist websites are calling for attacks on members of the anti-fascist demonstrators following their rally. The embassy will attempt to observe Saturday's events from a safe distance.

Comment

¶16. Last year's appearance of neo-Nazis in the capital was an embarrassment to city and federal officials, and Moscow authorities have been very clear that the neo-Nazis will not march this year.
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